

## [Visiting Hours]

Beliefs & Customs - Folk Stuff 17

FOLKLORE

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NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE

NAME OF WORKER Joseph Vogel

ADDRESS

DATE April 5, 1939

SUBJECT Visiting Hours at a City Hospital

1. Date and time of interview

April 6, 1939 from 2 to 4 P.M.

2. Place of interview

Kings County Hospital

3. Name and address of informant

A variety of persons

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4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Approaching the hospital, entry, upstairs, downstairs, and outside again.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE

NAME OF WORKER Joseph Vogel

ADDRESS

DATE April 5, 1939

SUBJECT Visiting Hours at a City Hospital THE APPROACH (Two women) Look, a playground. It's an excellent idea. While the mothers go upstairs in the hospital they can leave the children here to play.

What good does it do me? I can't leave my Annie here alone. It's too packed. Where you got room for so much children?

Say, you can't have a thousand swings, after all. They have to take chances. Come on, we're standing in the way. Leave the people pass.

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\*\*\*\*\* (On the walk toward the entrance of the hospital) Hey, Mike, how you like that?  
Somebody spit blood on the sidewalk. Bah?

Looks like somebody got T.B. They oughta clean it up. Is attracting flies.

Yah! Then the fly go on the eat. Come on, quick. Is big line inside today. Have to wait.

\*\*\*\*\* (Guard at doorway) Yeah, you kin go in this way. Go through the door on your right.  
Hey, you, where you going? Naw, information is through that door down there. Don't sit on  
there, kids. Come on, get your feet off there.

Yeah, mister, it's plenty crowded today, but it's nothing compared to Sunday. They come  
in the thousands on Sunday. They come in the thousands on Sunday. Naw, they don't give  
no trouble. Once in a while a couple of drunks comes around and I chase 'em away. The  
women leaves their kids out here. They bring their kids here, you would think for a good  
time. Why don't they leave the kids home? (A woman with two children) Mister, you think  
they'll leave me go up to the maternity ward?

Not with the kids, lady.

They'll leave me go up if I leave the children here?

Sure, try it. Don't do no harm trying. Is the lady expecting a delivery?

No, she had a delivery already. They had to give her three blood transfusions. You think  
they'll leave me see her?

Well, it don't do no harm trying. Go up to the maternity ward and they'll tell you. (The guard  
expostulating) You see, some people don't think. She wants to go up and see a lady with  
three transfusions. They won't let her in, if you want my opinion. Some people got no  
consideration for the sick. They come here for curiosity and it don't do the sick no good.

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Come on, kids, get your feet off there. Don't sit there. Run along and play.

Gee, it's a swell day. Real spring weather. It makes everybody feel good.

\*\*\*\*\* (Inside: a small waiting room with about 25 children on benches in one corner. An elderly woman in charge.) Who'll sing? Who knows how to sing? Who'll sing us a song? Will you? Oh, come now, children, somebody must know how to sing. What about you, can you sing? What! Can't you sing us a song? Don't you know any song? All right, listen, children. The little boy there is going to sing us a song. Quiet everybody. What's the name of the song you're going to sing? Oh, don't be bashful. Nobody's going to do you anything. Stand up, like a nice good boy. Oh, don't disappoint us. Well, what about the little girl there on the end of the bench? Will you sing a song for us? You surely must know a song. You don't? My! Well, who'll sing? Who knows how to sing? Who'll sing us a song?

\*\*\*\*\* (Guard at entrance to hallway leading to elevators) What ward, lady? Turn to your right and go to D. Sorry, if you want information ask at the information desk. Where you going there, mister? Where's your pass? Oh, I see, okay, turn to your left for ward A. Now don't rush me. Take your time. Please, don't give me no argument. I'm too busy now. Turn to your right, that's right, lady. Take the elevator to the fifth floor. Don't ask me. Now look here, what do you want me to do, go up with you? A fine mess I'd be in if I went up with a couple of thousand people. Ward C, lady, that's right, go straight ahead.

\*\*\*\*\* (Two young women in the hallway) Ooo, I hate to go up. It gives me the creeps when I see all dose sick people. I wouldn't mind it if Milly was in a private room. But you have to be in a room where there's other sick people, and they look at you——oooo, it makes me feel——

Oh, come on, don't be a fraidy-cat.

\*\*\*\*\* (At the elevator) Get in back of the line, folks. Right there. Are you a doctor, mister? I thought you was a doctor with dat t'ing in your pocket. Get in line over here. Now

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wait a minute,lady, you can't push in here. Nottin doing, you can't push in ahead these other people. Yeh, you, who you think I'M 4 talking to? Who's fresh? D'you think I'm doing this for my health? There's gotta be same order or nobody'd get on the elevator. All right, go on complain.

Ever see anything like that? She's insulted. Let her walk out, what do I care? Okay, here's the elevator. Now take it easy, folks. Keep in line. Hey, there, don't push. Take it easy. Don't push, please! I said DON'T PUSH!

\*\*\*\*\* (Nursery ward; waiting-room) Jes yuh look oveh der. Dem nurses dey wearin' gauze on their face. Puttin' diapers on de kids. Kickin' up de legs, dem kids is. Jeez, neveh saw so many in all mah life. Mus be hun'erds. How they know which is who? Jes yuh look at dat man. The nurse puttin, a white gown oveh his head. Mighty careful dey is. Won'er where is Frank's baby. Dey won't let me in der, not unless I'se de father.

Ha, ha! Da's a hot one! (Two women on the bench) I asked already. They don't let me in. Particular they got all of a sudden. "It's my nephew, my sister's baby," I said. A lot they care.

It's the first baby?

The first? It's already the toid, thank God.

A easy case she had, Hah?

Easy? Well, thank God, everything came out all right. By the first baby it was harder. They used instruments, they gave ether, and now you should see.. a boy, it's a pleasure to look at. Some bris! You should've seen. It was in the hospital, downstairs in the basement. It was something to see.

Yeh, a bris ..... it's something.

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Yeh, it's something. Why shouldn't it be something? (Man trying to gain admittance to nursery) I'd like to go in to see.—

You the fadder?

No, I'm the—

Sorry, you can't come in now.

But why can't I——?

Sorry, mister, the only onces ones can come in now is the husband and the mudder and the fadder.

\*\*\*\*\* (The back stairway) Come on, two more to go to the sixth floor. We shoulda gone up wid the elevator.

Boy, is I puffin.

Watch it, somebody's comin' down.

Look like he wuz a doctor.

Mebbe wuz an interne. Dis place is fulla internes.

Ah, boy! What d'yuh say? Le's go!

Comin', boy. Up we goes! (Two attendants going down) Cook special meals, me eye! Some nerve asking me that.

You shoulda spoke your mind. I wouldn't let 'em get away with that. Nothing doing.

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I sure told 'em something. What they think, we got nothing else to do only cook special meals? You would think they was somebody important.

Yeah, soon as they begin feeling better they think they own the place. What I tell 'em is, "This is a hospital. I only take orders. Anything special you speak to your doctor."

That's telling 'em something. (An interne and a nurse) I waited five minutes.

Is that so? Think of it, you waited five minutes.

Yes, five minutes. As long as that.

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Is that so? All of five minutes, imagine that.

Yes, imagine that. T'hee-hee-hee!

\*\*\*\*\* (Maternity ward: a group of nurses in a small room) Ouch, it tickles. Go easy, now.

Hold your head back, dear.

Don't get them mixed up, will you?

What are they looking for, streptococci or anything?

Say anything, I guess.

Ouch, you pushed it too far.

It can't be helped, darling. You're next, Mary. (A nurse explains) They're taking nose and throat cultures. There's been a lot of pneumonia going around and they're trying to find out

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if any of the nurses are carriers. (Two girls coming along) Look, Helen, what those nurses are doing. They're pushing cotton up their noses.

Must be a disinfectant.

I'll bet it's they shouldn't breathe in germs.

Maybe it's they shouldn't breathe out germs.

Gee, in a hospital must be lotta germs around.

Don't be silly. They use disinfectant. Can't you smell[?].it?

Smells like chloroform to me.

Silly, they don't use chloroform any more. They use ether.

All right, so I smell ether. Coming? (A man and two women) Hold da flowers up. You spoil 'em. They gonna spoil anyhow.

The florist toll' me they last five days. Held 'em up.

That's nice, flowers. They smell nice. Look nice too.

Yeah, sure. Mrs. Tomasella she goona like 'em. She like flowers.

Gotta whole garden in backa house.

Don't talk so loud. Which way we go? 7 (Two women standing near wall) She's laying in the hospital and you would think the neighbors would call in her husband and give him a bite to eat, poor man he's in the house by himself and so Mrs. Kowalski from upstairs calls him in to give him a bite to eat and what do you think, she gives him sardines. Now I ask you, a nerve a woman's got, to call in a man, his wife laying in the hospital, and give him



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a can sardines what he can get in a cafeteria. If it was me I'd say to her, "Mrs. Kowalski, it's very kind you call me in to give me a bite to eat, my wife laying in the hospital, but thank you just the same for your can sardines. Pfoo on you!" (A mixed group coming off elevator) Yeh, this looks like the right place. There they are, you can see them from here. Boy, there's a lot of 'em there. Think they'll let us in with a crowd like that? Gee, it turned my stomach. They shoulda told us we was on the wrong floor. All those old women laying there like dead. They must have cancer or something. D'you see that woman with a pipe sticking out of her nose. I wonder what that was. It was a rubber pipe went down to her throat. I'll bet she can't breathe so they stick a pipe in her nose for her to breathe. God, suppose the pipe slips out. I din't see no nurse around. She'd croak before anybody'd notice it. Aw, forget it. (Random remarks) There's a woman all alone. Wonder she's got somebody to visit her. I'd feel god-awful if I was lying in a hospital with all these visitors and nobody came to visit me.

- So he spends fifteen dollars on the goods, he's gonna make a big profit on it, see? So what happens? He gets stuck with the goods, he can't get rid of them if he wants to give 'em away, and there's fifteen bucks shot to hell.

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\* She'll feel better now. Don't worry. What's the use of worrying? You saw with your own eyes, she had color in her cheeks, she looked a million times better. She'll feel better now, take my word for it.

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(Administrative offices: the Superintendent's secretary speaking) Now I have explained to you about all there is to be explained about the organization of the hospital, which is the same but on a larger scale than the small hospital. All these departments are dedicated to the welfare of the patient. That is the important thing. Yes, a lot of people come here asking for information. Yesterday a reporter came who was interested in the women's

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angle: what interested her was, for instance, that last year our laundry washed over 7 million pieces. We get a lot of highschool kids who ask me to give them material for essays, but I shoo them out. They are not of course interested as you are in the workings of the whole hospital. The thing to remember is that our 3,000 employees are all dedicated to the service of the sick. We have about 400 WPA workers here who are a great help. We don't know what we'd do without them. Not long ago they were going to close down the WPA hospital project and we all felt bad about it. Oh yes, we all signed petitions. Now only last week 70 WPA workers were dismissed on account of Congress economizing. Our employees pitch in and do extra work, because they are devoted to the care of the sick. No, I don't think you have to talk to the employees, because I can tell you what they'll say: "The hospital is dedicated to the welfare of the sick." That's what it all comes down to, they'll all tell you the same thing. The ambulance driver? Oh, he'll tell you the same thing. The thing uppermost in his mind about his job is that the purpose of his job is service to the sick. Yes, that's what it is, I see you understand: service to the sick.

Any questions you have, I'll be glad to answer, any time you come back. You will of course let me see your paper so I can check up on facts. That's a rule we have, if anybody writes about the hospital we want to check up on the facts.

Yes, that's the thing to remember: primarily our hospital is devoted to the care of the sick.

\*\*\*\*\* (Downstairs at entrance to emergency ward) Hey, look at the cops. Four cops. Boy, must be a accident or something.

Maybe it's a murder.

Maybe it's a gangster.

What they need so many cops for, if a gangster is in the hospital?

Ah, these gangsters is tough guys. You gotta hold 'em down.

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Maybe we'll read about it in the newspapers. (The cops) He comes into the barber shop with them trick neckties. I got the aprong over me, he don't know who I am. "Nothing doin'," I says, "I got plenty of ties." He keeps after me, you know how these peddlers are. But I don't say nothing, see? Then the barber whispers in his ear, "Hey, buddy, he's a cop." Wow! You oughta see him beat it. He-ha-ha!

You ask him for his license?

I was saving that, but the barber scared him out.

Yeah, I had one like that. Remember, about two years ago—— (A nurse) Those cops? Oh, every ambulance brings in a cop. They don't mean nothing.

\*\*\*\*\* (In the hallway) Where's Jimmie? I told you to keep your eye on him. Where'd he go? Why din't you watch him? I oughta slap your face. (Two girls) Don't cry. Why you crying? Your mother said you shouldn't cry. Don't cry, Agnes. Please don't cry.

\*\*\*\*\* (Guard at exit) Swell day all right. 'Bout time we got the sun. Makes you feel good. This thing on my hand? I had a boil and I scraped it 'gainst a door, so 10 I got it bandaged up.

Hey, come on, kids, don't stand by the door. Move over, will yuh? Yuh folks will be down any minute now. Sure, they coming out now. Go on, you, you wanna get stepped on?

Yeh, it's a swell day all right.

\*\*\*\*\* (Man sitting on stone fence outside) Sure. Nice day. Sure. Lotsa people. Sure, bigga hospital. Me no speak English. Another man sitting on fence) Yeh, it's good and sunny. Oh, yeh, it's a fine hospital. They treat people very gentle. It's not likt like it used to be years ago. Then it used to be if you go in the hospital, it's goodbye. You had one chance in a million to come out alive. Wery bad conditions used to be. Like dogs they

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used to treat people. But now it's a big difference. They talk to you nice, real democratic. Negroes, Italians, Jews, everybody is treated nice. It goes to show you, if plenty people complain you get soivice. Then LaGuardia came in and he made things over. Yeh, now is nice. Regal democratic. (Along sidewalk) Toss it over here. Go ahead, Frank, you run bases.

Hey, don't throw the ball like that. Now I gotta chag chase it.

Mollie, stop running like wild. Stay by papa.

Uh, such a beautiful day. It's a pleasure to breathe such fresh air. Mmmm! Smells so good.

Mama, buy me popcorn.

You wanna get sick? Stay by papa.

He tolla me itsa no good. I tolla him don't you believe it. He tolla me fuh two dollars he buy da real stuff. I tolla him, looka here, you t'ink I don't know nuttin, yah?

A little girl like that, it's a shame. They don't know what's the matter. Puss on the hip. The big specialists can't do anything for her. She's been laying in the hospital three months, and now they say she'll have to stay 11 another two months until it heals by itself.

Try to get compensation. Try!

I'll get it. And if dey don't give it to me I'll break der bones. That's how yuh get results.

I'm feeling all right, thank God. An end comes to everything. How you feeling?

Not so bad, thank God.

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\*\*\*\*\* (On the corner) Look up there, darling. You see her by the window? You see she's sitting in bed by the window? Look, she's seeing us. Wave your hand, darling. Wave your hand.

END